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# GIORDANO BRUNO

## THEOSOPHY'S APOSTLE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

A Lecture delivered in the Sorbonne at Paris, on June 15, 1911

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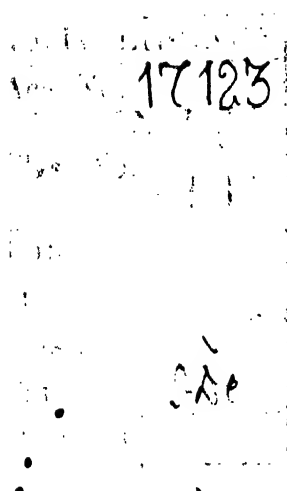
## THE STORY OF GIORDANO BRUNO

BY

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1913



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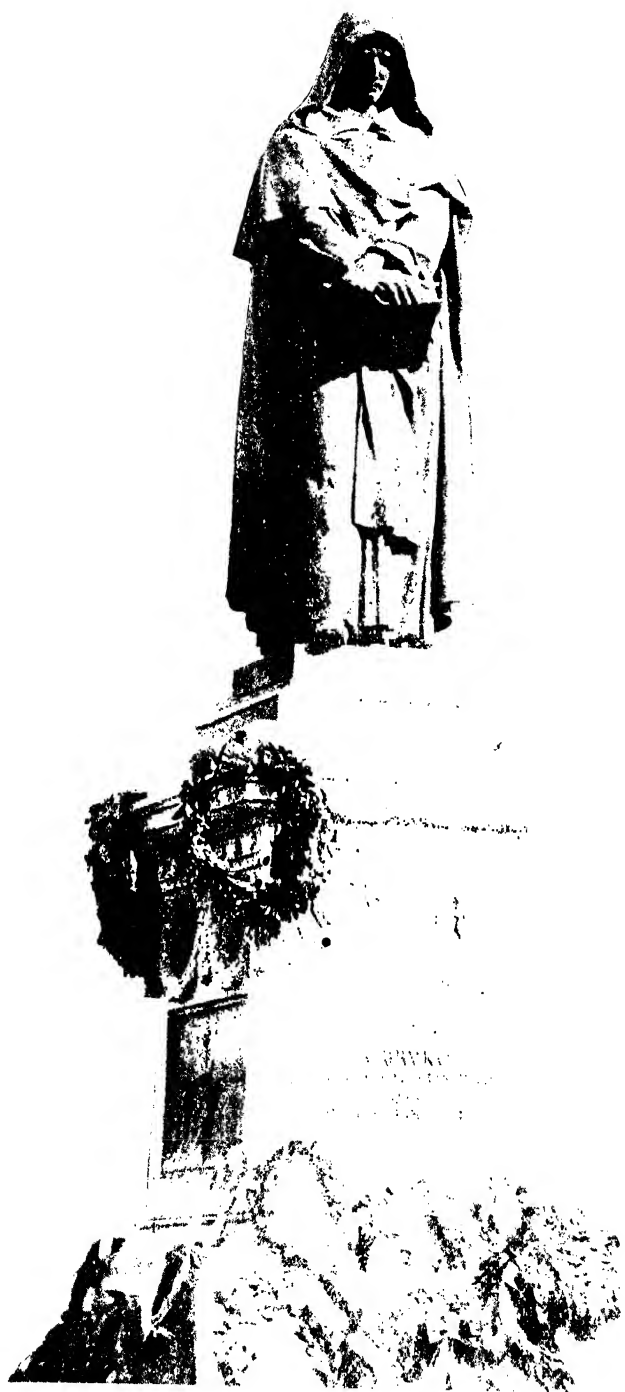
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**BY**

**The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras, India**





STATUE OF GIORDANO BRUNO.

## GIORDANO BRUNO

### THEOSOPHY'S APOSTLE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

THREE centuries and more have rolled away since Giordano Bruno, the Nolan, spoke in the Sorbonne of Paris; not here he spoke, in this magnificent Hall in which we are gathered to-night; but nevertheless it was in this same famous Sorbonne that he set forth his theories on the Infinite Universe, on the Universal Life, on the Immortality—or rather, the Eternity—of the human Spirit, and on the Life Heroic that leads to Human Perfection.

Come with me up the stream of History to the sixteenth century. We are in the year 1576. Bruno, having narrowly escaped the clutches of the Inquisition—which had tried to seize him in his monastery and to arraign him for a somewhat audacious pamphlet, in which he had jibed with caustic irony at the vices of the monks and had criticised, none too gently, some of the dogmas of the Church—had fled from the neighbourhood of Naples and had betaken himself, with more courage than good sense, to Rome. Rome had no welcome for the peccant monk, and finding there the same danger menacing him, he escaped to Noli, a small town of northern Italy, and sought to gain there a modest

livelihood by teaching, dropping his garb of monk. Noli, however, proved a failure, and Geneva attracted his errant steps. But the Calvinist proved no less hostile to him than the Roman Catholic, for Beza, successor of Calvin, was hard as iron, and the ashes of the fire that had burned Servetus were scarcely cold. A hint that his arrest was ordered and that a similar fate might meet him, sent him, an agile climber, over the city wall, since the gates had been closed to cage him; he betook himself to Lyons, later on to Toulouse—where the stake of Vanini glowed in the not distant future—and finally reached Paris.

Eager to spread his ideas, he asked permission of the Sorbonne to lecture; permission was given, and soon a professorship was offered, with the usual condition: a Sorbonne professor must attend the Mass. Now Bruno had no mind to attend Mass; impatient of falsehood, frank to rashness, to him a lie in action was as base as a lie in words. But the times were dangerous; often in Paris streets the cry rang out: "The Mass—or death." Yet, death or no death, Giordano Bruno was resolute not to buy a professorship with a fraud, so of professorship he would have none.<sup>1</sup> What to do? How seat him in a chair in the Sorbonne? Henry III, then King, was attracted for the moment by the young Italian. The students, careless of authority, would, by all means, hear the Nolan, so great a contrast to the ordinary professor; his fiery and vivid eloquence; his irony, now gay, now biting; his satirical humour,

<sup>1</sup> He said later as to this: "I would not accept it, because it is the rule for lecturers in this city to attend Mass and the other Sacred Offices, and I have always avoided doing so, knowing that I was excommunicated for having left the religious life and unfrocked myself; and though in Toulouse I was lecturer in ordinary, I was not bound to do this, as I should have been bound in Paris had I accepted the post of lecturer in ordinary." (Doc. IX).

sometimes laughing and light, sometimes sardonic and bitter; his magnetic personality above all, drove them wild with enthusiasm. A way must be found, lest King should be angered, and students rise in revolt. "Let us create for him a professorship extraordinary, without conditions," said the somewhat alarmed authorities. It was done, and Giordano Bruno was named professor extraordinary, with permission to teach the dull and harmless system of Raymond Lully, a system of logic and mnemonics. To all appearance his subject was innocent enough, but the solemn University grey-beards did not know their new professor, truly extraordinary, and the way in which he could vivify the dreariest theme.

To him, in truth, the theme was not dreary, but full of vivid possibilities, opening out to him vast horizons. For was not speech materialised thought? that which in the intelligible world was Idea became Thought in the world of intelligence, and Object in the world of matter. Was not the Idea creator, while speech and object were only its creatures? God Himself, when He willed to create a universe, manifested Himself as Word, and the Word, in turn, was made flesh.

Under the veil of Lully, he could teach the philosophy which he had breathed in his father's house, the lore of Pythagorean Greece, transplanted into Italy.

Let us see who this Giordano Bruno was, who for a brief time was the idol of the Paris students, and for a few months, at least, the favourite of a fanatical and weak King.

He was born in the neighbourhood of Naples, in the little town of Nola, under the flashes of Vesuvius. This town had been once a city of some importance, dating from the Etruscan period, and perhaps colonised

by some Greeks from Chalcis. Its inhabitants, brave and warlike folk, had guarded well their town through many a period of storm; more than once the troops of Hannibal had rolled back broken from its walls. Later on, the town had been sacked by the Goths, and had fallen into the hands of the Saracens. When its best-known son, our Giordano Bruno, was born, it was little more than a heap of ruins. Yet over those ruins shone the mighty figure of Pythagoras, for the whole district was part of 'Greater Greece,' and had been a centre of Greek philosophy; the tradition of Greek thought and of the doctrines of the neo-platonic School of Alexandria was still living and potent, and it may be that, lying on the slopes of Vesuvius, the ardent boy dreamed of Hypatia, and half awed, half attracted, was fascinated and stimulated by her fate.

It was in this atmosphere that Filippo Bruno, he who was to be known as Giordano, was born, and under the ægis of this philosophy he was nurtured. Moreover the boy listened eagerly, with shining eyes, to the talk of the erudite and cultured men who gathered in his father's house, fervid lovers and devoted admirers of the philosophy and the ideals of Pythagorean Greece.

His father was a man of cold, strong, balanced temperament, at times bordering on severity, and always austere; a man of the type of the Stoic, a thorough Pagan of ancient times. Our philosopher recalls an incident of his childhood: One evening after supper, one of the neighbours cried gaily: "Never did I feel so jolly as I feel at this moment." The father answered grimly: "Never wast thou such a fool as now."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De gli Heroici Furori*, Part I, Dial. ii.

His mother was gentle and pious, timid and limited in intelligence ; she tenderly loved her son, and her one hope, her one prayer for him, was that he should become a monk.

From this strangely assorted pair, so opposed in temperament, was born this fiery spirit, this knight-errant of philosophy. A soul aflame, a spirit subtle and proud, an inspired orator, a prolific writer, at times himself carried away by the torrent of his own fatal facility—such was he whom Hegel called a “comet that flashed across Europe,” whom Bernouf spoke of as “this blazing spark of a fiery life”.

The mother’s prayer was fulfilled. Filippo Bruno, a mere boy, but fifteen years of age, steeped in the thought of Pythagoras, of Plotinus, of Porphyry, of Proclus, of Iamblichus, entered a Dominican monastery, and hid his ardent heart under the frock of the monk. His superiors, unwisely delighted with his remarkable and precocious intelligence, dreamed of great glory to come through him to their monastery, and named him Giordano, after the successor of S. Dominic. So lightly did the boy’s feet tread the road which led to the Dominican monastery, and thence, by many a precipice and many a height and depth, to the Field of Flowers in Rome.

Poor mother, dreaming of her son in the peaceful Nolan home, dreaming of a pious future, of holy sermons to devoted listeners—dreams never to be realised. Poor, simple, gentle heart, and narrow intelligence. It was as though a barnyard hen had hatched an eagle’s egg, and gazed up helplessly at the young eaglet that had nestled ’neath her wing, and then, grown strong, had cloven his way sunwards. She had dreamed of a saint,



and had given birth to a hero ; she had planned for a monk, and behold ! a heretic and a martyr. Cruel, in truth, was the fate of the mother, but splendid the destiny of the son. For the red glow of Bruno's funeral pyre was the rosy dawn of modern thought in Europe.<sup>1</sup> By his words he was to vivify life, by his martyrdom he was to slay death.

To understand Bruno, to understand the intensity of the passion, of the ardour, with which he proclaimed his message, we must realise the splendour of the light which had just burst upon the dazzled eyes of Europe, the immensity of the horizons it disclosed.

In all civilised countries, the Hebraic cosmology dominated the world of thought, and Aristotle was the arbiter of all science, the adopted son of the Christian Church tyrannising equally over Rome and Geneva. To challenge Aristotle was as heretical as to challenge canonical Scripture : both were heretical, and heresy spelt death. The earth was immovably fixed, the centre of the universe ; on and for this earth, God had suffered and died, and from it had ascended visibly to the fixed heaven arching above it ; everything had been created out of nothing for the sole benefit of the human race—for it the sun, moving amid the clouds, for it the silvery moon, for it the myriad stars ; beyond those stars, studded like golden nails in the revolving azure vault of the firmament, was the immutable heaven, the throne of God, the realm of saints and of angels. On high, above our heads, heaven with its delights ; below, beneath our feet, hell with its torments. *The Universe is finite—small, narrow, limited, walled in by visible horizons.*

<sup>1</sup> The simile is due to M. Bartholmess.

Not so ! cried out the new insurgent thought. The earth is rolling round the sun, one of a myriad worlds ; the sun is fixed, and round it the earth is travelling, with many another revolving ball ; there is no firmament, there is only space ; space above and below us, space stretching around us everywhere, space dotted with a million worlds, inhabited like our own. Where heaven and hell may be we know not ; there is room and to spare for every thing. *The Universe is infinite—wide, broad, unlimited, stretching through limitless space.*

Such was the startling antithesis, such the cry of re-awakened Science, ringing out with glad assurance, and deafening the ears of Faith.

We, who from infancy have been brought up in a limitless universe, cannot readily conceive—unless we use a vivid imagination<sup>1</sup>—the upheaval of ideas, the dismay produced in the minds of men, by the new theories which launched our hitherto stable world, a rolling ball, into the void of infinite space—infinite nothingness, it seemed. Man felt himself crushed by this Nature, which had always been his servant, created for his use, but which had suddenly grown gigantic, overwhelming, menacing, while he was reduced to a mere pigmy, lost in infinite size. He was terrified ; and as the child, who seeing in the dusk of twilight some familiar thing grown dim and terrible, runs for protection to his mother, hiding his face in her bosom, so man, scared by the new vistas opened before him in a world that was familiar, rushed madly for protection to the arms of his mother, the Church, and hid his eyes in her faith.

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Memory ?

Only five years before Bruno's birth, Copernicus had given to the world, from his death-bed, his revolutionary book. He had, in fact, revived the science of antiquity—the science of the Mysteries, the science slain by Aristotle—and, like Pythagoras, he had taught that the sun was fixed and that the earth moved. These ideas were innate in Bruno, the fruit of a long series of lives in which he had known the great Being incarnated as Pythagoras, and these innate ideas rushed into articulate speech as soon as he studied the ideas of Copernicus.

The period was, indeed, the beginning of a terrible crisis, alike for Religion and for Science, a crisis which well-nigh became fatal to both, dragging the one into superstition, the other into scepticism. For the new ideas seemed to threaten the very life of humanity, to menace it with destruction.

"How then!" came the cry from all sides, "is man, the king of creation, naught but a pigmy, a thing of no account, an atom, a mere grain of sand in the desert of an infinite universe?" The dignity, the greatness, the moral stature of the human soul, were destroyed by these ideas. Everything was tottering, was crumbling into ruins, round the feet of an amazed and horrified Church. It was with a true intuition of the change implied in the old-new astronomy, if by atrocious methods, that the Church straightway set herself in opposition to the altered science. The mere change as to the relation between the earth and the sun mattered little; but the change of relation between man and God, the sacrifice of Christ for love of man, His victory over death and triumphant ascension into heaven—these mattered infinitely, for they were the charter which secured the immortality of man.

Bruno, on the other hand, viewed the problem which confronted the sixteenth century from quite another view-point, the problem of the relations between God, the infinite universe, and man. In his turn he cried out, but with a triumph and a transport of joy that seemed diabolical to the alarmed Church : " Yes ! yes ! the earth with its inhabitants revolves and moves in space ; the worlds are innumerable, the Universe illimitable, Life incarnates everywhere in forms. Therefore life is universal, and on all sides creates living beings. This life, universal, omnipresent, infinite, is the Universal Being whom men have called God. On all sides inhabited worlds, everywhere living beings ! Then Death can only disintegrate bodies ; it cannot touch life. Hence the body has no value except as an instrument for a life which is deific, a life noble, loving, heroic, worthy of being a part of the life universal and divine. Fear, falsehood, baseness, these are the real ills of life. Dishonour is worse than death, since dishonour stains the life, while Death but breaks the form."

Such was the new moral basis, corresponding to the new thought, that Bruno offered to Christianity with a certain naïve expectation of friendly response : The Immanence of God, the Life Universal animating all bodies ; the eternity of the Spirit, since by his very nature he is part of the Life Universal ; based on these two natural and irrefragable facts, the cult of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, the life heroic, the only way in which the specialised life could be made worthy of the Life Universal.

This was the thesis upheld by Giordano Bruno in all the countries of Europe visited by him, in all the Universities which opened their doors to him, in all

the centres of thought. It was this view of life which fanned his eloquence into flame. Science for him was not arid and sterile, a mere set of categories; it was a religion, fruitful and inspired. He loved science, he preached science with all his fiery energy and ineffable enthusiasm; he was the apostle of science, its fervid defender, and he became its martyr. For to him science meant Occultism, the study of the divine Mind in Nature, the study of divine Ideas embodied in material objects. By studying objects, then, it was possible to read the language of Nature, and to learn therein the thoughts of God.

But Christianity utterly refused his message. Had it accepted it, the bitter conflict waged from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century between religion and science would never have broken out. The Church imprisoned the Messenger; then burned his body to ashes, and scattered the ashes to the winds, which carried them as seeds of truth over Europe. But the thesis rejected by the sixteenth century is being eagerly accepted by the twentieth. The message stifled by the smoke of his martyrdom is ringing through Europe to-day. His voice died in his throat, but it is now echoing around us, for "to know how to die in one century is to live for all centuries to come".<sup>1</sup> Vainly did the Vatican place his books on the Index. His thoughts have winged their way to immortality, and they are spreading over the modern world; they are *Theosophy*.

<sup>1</sup> *Tansillo*: To those whom Heaven favours the greatest evils are converted into still greater good: since necessities bring forth toil and study, and these in most cases [produce] the glory of immortal splendour.

*Cicada*: And death in one century brings life in all the others.

*De gli Heroici Furori*, Part I, Dial. ii.

Three of the works of Giordano Bruno are of special interest to-day, those which he himself called "the pillars of my system," "the foundations of the whole edifice of our philosophy". The two first are purely philosophical, and are entitled: *Della Causa, Principio e Uno*, and *Del Infinito Universo e Mondi*. The third contains also much of his philosophy, but is irradiated with his lofty and inspiring conception of a truly human life; it is the famous *De gli Heroici Furori*, and contains the application of his philosophy to conduct, and the description of his ideal.

If the earth be not an immovable body in the centre of a finite Universe, it follows—according to Bruno's philosophy—that the Universe has neither centre or limits; thus the Infinite is already realised in the visible creation, in the immensity of space. Hence, in short, the undetermined totality of beings constituted an unlimited unity, produced and sustained by the primitive unity of life Universal, the Cause of causes. That is to say, this Unity of life is the basis of humanity, and the Immanence of God is the foundation for the solidarity of man.

The working out of these ideas is sometimes obscure in the text of his books, but the underlying original concept is ever clear, and it is that of One Existence, a Life, a Consciousness unlimited, intelligent, and universal. This Existence is everything—everything without exception; in it everything has being, not only actualities—a universe that is—but also possibilities—all universes that may be. This Existence contains all; all derives from it, all returns to it. Bruno used to say, quoting from S. Paul: "Truly was it said that in Him 'we live and move and have our being'." Yet was he burned as an atheist.

This One Existence manifests itself in three hypostases, or modes :

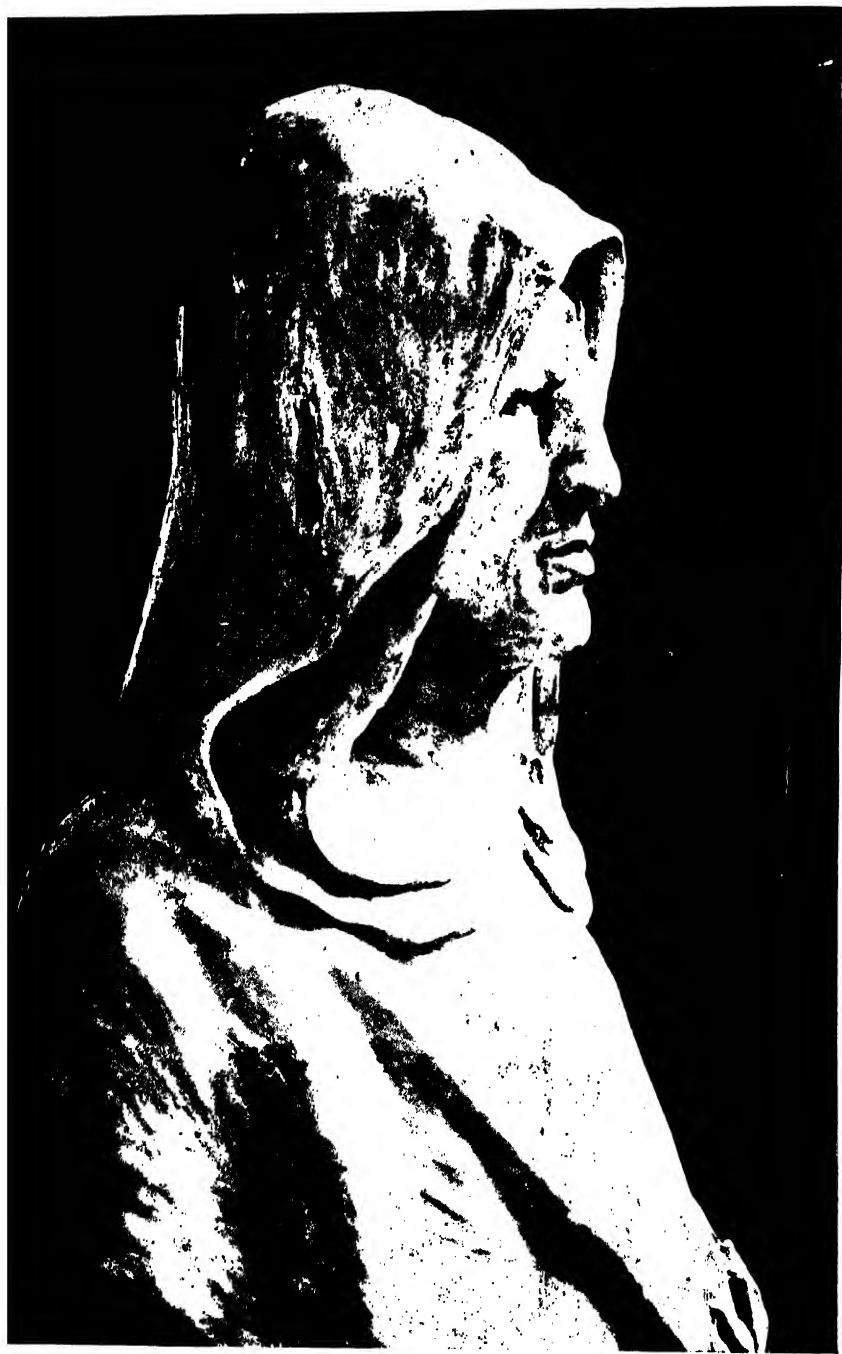
(1) The first is THOUGHT. This Thought is the Substance of the Universe. The Act of divine Thought, according to Giordano Bruno, is the substance of things, the root-base of all particular beings. Herein his philosophy recalls the Vedāntic doctrine—which must have been in him as the result of his past—that the Universe is but the Thought of God, and that all things save the One Reality, the Universal Self, are unreal.

(2) & (3) In this Thought, the Substance, are two elements : SPIRIT and MATTER, which are the second and third hypostases of Universal Being. Spirit is the positive, or formative, element, which informs and moulds all. Matter is the negative, or receptive, element, which becomes all. Again we note the appearance of Indian thought, this time of the Sāṅkhya—another of the six Schools—but with an important difference. In Bruno's philosophy, Spirit and Matter are always conjoined, and the universe consists of these two elements ; they are opposites, ever bound together, and together form Nature, the shadow of God.<sup>1</sup> In the Sāṅkhya, on the contrary, Spirit (Puruṣha) exists by itself, dwelling apart as a witness, as a spectator, and reflecting itself in Matter as energy, acting only on Matter as a magnet acts on particles of iron : Energy and Matter together are the parents of form. Many will recognise herein the doctrine of the great German biologist, Ernest Hæckel, who, probably all unconsciously, is really a

<sup>1</sup> " Birth, growth, and the perfection of all which we see is from opposites through opposites and in opposites ; and where there is opposition, there there is action and reaction, there is motion, variety with its grades and succession." (*Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante*.) Here, again, we are reminded of the Hindu 'pair of opposites'.







BUST OF GIORDANO BRUNO (SIDE VIEW).

follower of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, and holds that Force and Matter create the Universe. For Bruno, however, Spirit is ever present, not as a witness but as an agent, for Spirit is the builder of every form; it is the one formative, or creative, agency :

Be it ever so small a thing, it has in it part of the spiritual substance ; which, finding appropriate conditions, expands into a plant or an animal, receiving the members of any kind of body which commonly is called living ; for Spirit is found in all things, and there is not the minutest particle which does not contain such a portion in itself, which is not ensouled.<sup>2</sup>

The second element, Matter, is passive. Bruno says that we should conceive Matter as one, even as we conceive Spirit as one. Let us take, for example, he says, the analogy of an art, like that of the wood-worker. In all its operations it has as material, as subject, wood. This art produces, always in its own material, the most varied forms and objects, none of which is proper or natural to the wood itself. Thus Spirit, the formative principle, of which Art is a reflection, requires for its operation certain Matter, or material, since no agent can work on nothing, nor produce anything from nothing. But the Matter on which Spirit works cannot be perceived by the senses, as can that on which Art is employed ; it is perceptible only to Reason. The senses only perceive its forms, after Spirit has shaped them. All natural forms come forth from Matter, and to Matter they return ; a grain becomes herb, then corn in the ear, then bread, chyle, blood, seed, embryo, man, corpse ; then again, earth, stone or some other thing, and so on in endless revolutions. There is surely then herein, throughout these recurring changes, something which transforms itself into all these different objects, and yet remains the same. Whence it follows that nothing save Matter is constant,

<sup>1</sup> *Della Causa Principio e Uno*, Dial. ii.

or worthy of being called a principle. That which is, that which exists, that which all beings have in common is Matter. Matter should therefore be regarded as a being, a unit, which produces all bodies.<sup>1</sup>

“To reach the knowledge of the One is the aim of every philosophy.” “Bodies are the true objects of knowledge.” We have here two admirable definitions of philosophy and of science. Philosophy is the knowledge of Unity by the Reason, apart from the multiplicity of objects; Science is the observation of objects by means of the senses. Only he who knows the Unity is a philosopher. “Such a one”, said Plato, “I esteem as a God”.

The positive element, Spirit, is the soul in all separate beings, the soul of each object. This is another important concept in Bruno’s philosophy. The Universal Spirit individualises as the soul in each body; hence, he says, the soul is the cause of the harmony of bodies, not their resultant. In this lies the essential difference between a spiritual and a materialistic philosophy.

Materialism holds that the molecular arrangement of matter is the cause of life and intelligence, that life and thought depend on such arrangements. A spiritual philosophy maintains that life is the formative principle, and that its efforts to express and manifest itself determine the various aggregations of molecules, building thus the bodily organs intended to subserve the functions of life. In the first, it is Matter which produces all; in the second, Life dominates Matter, and shapes it for its own use.

<sup>1</sup>This is a summary of Bruno’s teaching as to Matter. The student may compare *Della Causa Principio e Uno*, Dial. iii.

For Giordano Bruno the two elements are eternal — Matter which produces a succession of bodies, Spirit which individualises itself as soul. The soul thereafter develops itself through successive incarnations in bodies which ever become more complex and more perfect. The perfecting of the soul is the goal of all progress, since the life of the soul is the life of man. Sin is the negation, the absence, of good.

As for death, it is absolutely negligible, for the body is continually changing, and every change is a little death.

There is no death for us, nor for any substance ; nothing substantially diminishes, but everything, travelling through infinite space, changes in appearance. And because all of us are subject to the best efficient law, we must not believe, hold and hope aught else, than that as all proceeds from good, so everything is good, works towards good, and ends in good.<sup>1</sup>

In order to demonstrate that his philosophy must induce morality, and that morality is its sure basis, Giordano Bruno explains the constitution of man. Man is made up of three principles which reflect the three hypostases, or modes of manifestation, of God in the universe. Man thinks : hence he participates in the divine Substance, which is Thought—as we have seen ; this is the highest part of man, the germ of Divinity existing in him. Man feels : that is, he wills ; hence he reflects the divine Will, or Spirit, the formative element ; this individualises itself as soul, which is in man the positive element, individualised from Spirit the universal positive element ; this soul, by means of its higher powers, may unite itself to Thought, or Intelligence, while, by means of its lower powers, it may unite itself to the body, its creature. The student must not here

<sup>1</sup> *Del Infinito Universo e Mondi. Præmia Epistolare.*

allow himself to be confused by the nomenclature ; that which Bruno calls Thought is what we call in these days Spirit ; he does not use the term Spirit as an element in man ; that which is Universal Life, outside Man, he calls Spirit, and this becomes soul when particularised in man. His trinity is not therefore Spirit, Soul, and Body, but Thought, Soul and Body. He says the Soul must aspire upwards to Thought, where we should say that the soul must aspire upwards to the Spirit. The idea is identical ; only the names are different.

The body is man's instrument for action. Man acts ; that is to say, he manifests the positive principle of energy, making use of the negative principle, Matter. The body must, therefore be considered as man's third principle.

But we must be careful to assign to the body its proper place :

The soul is not in the body in any local sense, but only as intrinsic form, and as extrinsic formative agent, as that which makes the limbs, and shapes the mass from within and from without. The body, therefore, is in the soul, the soul is in Thought, and Thought is either God, or is in God, as Plotinus said.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, according to Bruno, man's true and primitive form is divinity ; if he has the consciousness of his own divinity, if he realises it, he may regain his primitive form, and raise himself to the highest heaven. Through knowledge of his own essential nature, man can regain the form divine.

The Church was ever saying to man : " Thou art wicked and corrupt, conceived and born in sin ; lying under the wrath of God, thou canst only be saved by

<sup>1</sup> *De gli Heroici Furori*, Part I, Dial. iii.

divine grace." Bruno said to man : " Thou art divine, and essentially pure and good ; realise thine own nature, and set thyself to rise until thou canst manifest that God who is ever in thy heart."

But how should man rise? By the will, which must be fixed to reach upwards to Thought, and must be ruler and lord. He likened, in one striking passage, the man to a ship, the captain of which was the human will, and the reason its rudder.

The captain, he says :

With the sound of the trumpet, that is, with his determined choice, summons all the warriors—that is to say, evokes all the powers (which are named warriors because they are in constant strife and contrast), or their effects (which are contending thoughts, some of which incline this way and some that); and he tries to bring them all together under the banner of a predetermined end. And should it happen that some of them be called in vain to quickly show themselves obsequious (especially those which proceed from natural powers, which obey the reason either slightly or not at all), at least through his effort to prevent their actions and his condemnation of those that cannot be prevented, it is shown how he kills the former and banishes the latter, proceeding against those with the sword of wrath, and against these with the whip of scorn.<sup>1</sup>

But something is needed to stimulate the will to this effort to lead the heroic, instead of the sensuous life. What is that something? It is the love of the Beautiful and the True.

The heroic enthusiast, uplifting himself by the species of divine beauty and goodness he has conceived, on the wings of the intellect and of the intellectual will, exalts himself to divinity, abandoning the form of inferior being.<sup>2</sup>

The soul which loves the objects of sense binds itself by means of this love to the body; but the soul which loves Beauty, Goodness, Truth, unites itself thereby to its inner God. The doctrine of Bruno

<sup>1</sup> *De gli Heroici Furori*, Part I, Dial. i.

<sup>2</sup> *De gli Heroici Furori*, Part I, Dial. iii

contains no threats ; he seeks to allure, to attract, not to alarm. To him Divinity is so supremely desirable, that it seems to him that God need only be seen to be loved. His ardent, passionate soul rushes upwards, spurning the delights of the lower world. For him no hell exists save the hell of the soul's degradation.

For the soul, he says, is able to degrade itself, even as it is able to rise. From the longings of the soul we may discover whether it is rising to the Divine, or descending to the brute. Poised between the Angel and the animal, with a hand laid on each, the soul must choose its mate ; Love gravitates towards earth, when it is attracted by sensual pleasures ; it soars aloft, when it pursues noble aspirations. Listen to his words :

Because the mind aspires to divine splendour, he shuns the gathering of the common herd ; he withdraws from common opinion . . . . If he aspires to the lofty splendour, he draws himself in as much as he can towards unity, he contracts himself as far as possible into himself, so as not to be similar to the many, because they are many ; and not to be hostile to the many, because they are dissimilar, if it be possible to keep both the one and the other good thing ; otherwise, let him hold on to that which seems to him the better . . . . The mind, therefore, that aspires high, in the first place ceases to care for the multitude, realising that that light reckons toil of no account, and is only to be found there where intelligence is ; and not even where there is any kind of intelligence, but where alone there is that which among those few principal and pre-eminent intelligences, is first, chief and unique . . . . [It is needful] to withdraw to the innermost part of oneself, considering that God is near, with oneself and within oneself, nearer than one can be to oneself, as that which is the Soul of souls, the Life of lives, the Essence of essences ; considering also that what you see, high or low or around you (as you choose to express it), of the stars, are bodies, are works similar to this globe in which we are, and in them is neither more nor less divinity present than there is in this globe of ours or in ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

Such is Bruno's word to man : By means of love fixed in contemplation on Divine Beauty and Goodness

<sup>1</sup> *De gli Heroici Furori*, Part II, Dial. i.

the soul is set aflame, and man becomes heroic, leading the only life which is worthy of such a fervid lover. The taste for lower objects is lost in the contemplation of the real and the lasting Beauty. This fervid lover of the Beautiful, the True and the Good shall so live, being present in the body, that with the better part of himself he is absent from it; he shall conjoin and bind himself as through an indissoluble sacrament to divine things, in such wise that he feels neither love nor hatred for mortal things, considering that he is above being servant and slave of his body; which he must not otherwise regard than as the prison which restricts his freedom; the lime which glues his wings; the chain which fetters his hands; the stocks which hold fast his feet; the veil which confuses his sight. But he withal shall not be serf, captive, ensnared, chained, idle, stockstill and blind; for his body can no longer tyrannise over him than he himself shall suffer it; seeing that the Spirit is placed over the body, just as the corporeal world and matter are subject to Divinity and to Nature. So shall he become strong against fortune, magnanimous against contumely, intrepid against want, sickness and persecutions.<sup>1</sup>

This, then, is the Heroic Life, as depicted by Giordano Bruno: and in the face of the fire which consumed his living body, will any dare to say that he did not, at least, strive to live it?

An objection arises. All cannot be heroic. What of those who cannot rise to heights so splendid? Is there no word of cheer for them? Oh yes! for the laurel-crown of heroism is not for the brows of only the successful and the strong; he also is heroic who aspires, even though, aspiring, he fails.

<sup>1</sup> *De gli Heroici Furori*, Part II, Dial. i.



Enough that all should run; enough that each should do that which is possible for him; since the heroic mind is content rather to fall or to fail worthily and in a high cause wherein the dignity of his Spirit is shown forth, than to achieve perfection in things less noble, or even base.<sup>1</sup>

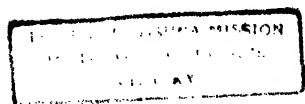
Thus taught Giordano Bruno.

The message that here, to-night, I have sought to expound, is a message not only to individuals, but to nations, for there are souls of nations, as well as souls of individuals. For the nation, as for the individual, thought is the instrument of progress; for both equally the effort to realise a noble and lofty Ideal transforms the life into the Great and the Heroic. But nations, like individuals, must choose between the brute and the God. The choice is ours. None, save ourselves, can compel. We can either wallow in the mire, degrading and abasing ourselves to the level of the brute, or we can, step by step, ascend to those sublime heights where is manifest the Eternal Ideal.

In our own hands is our fate, and that fate depends on our mastery of the body, or on our enslavement thereby. This body of ours is a magnificent instrument, but it must be an instrument and not a tyrant, usurping authority over its proper lord. Be then, as you will, either masters or slaves. Choose for yourselves, and also for your nation. France is idealistic at the core, the standard-bearer of ideas she was, marching in the van of Europe. For many a long year she has forgotten her birthright; she has been groping in cellars and in underground dens; she has been rolling in mire and in dung-heaps, declaring that these were the fit subjects of Art. Now she is awakening from the nightmare that has oppressed her, and is again beginning to

<sup>1</sup> *De gli Heroici Furori*, Part I, Dial. iii.

understand, as of old, that beauty, not ugliness is divine ;  
that purity, not vice, is alluring. True Art sees ever the  
Beautiful, and for the man and the nation alike progress  
lies in the sunlight and not in the gloom of the vault.  
Upward lies the road that climbs to the God ; down-  
wards the road that slopes to the brute. Choose, for  
before you lie open the roads, and the fate of the future  
depends on the choice.



## THE STORY OF GIORDANO BRUNO<sup>1</sup>

A boy was lying on a vine-clad hill, looking dreamily over the blue Mediterranean sea. As he lay there he could see the beautiful Bay of Naples, curving inwards to the fair city; and behind him rose, stern and forbidding, the mountain of Vesuvius, sending its dark smoke up into the stainless purity of the sky. One of the loveliest scenes that Italy, or that perhaps even the world, could offer was spread before his eyes; but the boy, readily sensitive as he generally was to all beauty of form and colour, to-day seemed indifferent to it all, and the large eyes, 'full of speculation,' were blind to the landscape he knew and loved so well.

For the lad was on the verge of a grave decision; should he or should he not bid farewell to the brightness of his youth, and shut himself up within the grey walls of a Dominican monastery, to devote himself there to study and to the search after truth? Monk or soldier, it seemed, he must be. The times were rough and violent, and there was no chance for peaceful study save under the garb of the monk. Besides, Nature herself seemed as uneasy and troubled as the States of Italy. In the quaint words of an old chronicler, there were "earthquakes, inundations, eruptions, famine, and pestilence; in that troublous time creation itself seemed

<sup>1</sup> This story was one of a series written by me when I was a sceptic. Giordano Bruno fascinated me much in the past.—A. B.

to violate its own laws". And the boy was fanciful and superstitious, and he thought that perhaps the monastery would be the spot most approved of by his God amid such troubles. But most of all, learning seemed to beckon him; for within the monastery were books, and ancient manuscripts, and wonderful parchment rolls that he could not yet decipher but which Father Anselm had promised him that he should understand, if he donned the garb of the monk and took on him the vows of Dominic. His pulse beat more quickly and the colour glowed on his dark cheeks as he thought of all he might learn and the knowledge he might master, as with some the pulse would beat in dreaming of gay frolic, and the colour glow with the thought of some bright scene of festivity or of love. And when Giordano Bruno rose from the hill-side his mind was made up, and he had resolved to enter the Dominican monastery, for there he fancied that learning should be his comrade, and truth itself should lift her veil before his eager reverent eyes.

"You have been long, Giordano, and it grows late," said his mother tenderly, as the lad entered his lowly home in the little town of Nola. "And your uncle has been awaiting you, and has gone away sore vexed. For he says that now you are a strong lad and a tall one, it is time that you should throw away the books you are ever poring over, and should learn to carry arms, as befits a gallant lad."

"Mother," the boy answered gently, "I shall never carry arms, nor go out to rob and kill my fellows at the order of some idle noble. I have resolved to go to the Dominican monastery, where I have long been for study under Father Anselm, and the good monk has promised that he will teach and train me, if I will promise after

a while to take the vows of the order, and become one of the brethren there. And, truly, to me it is a nobler *life to study and learn what wise men have written*, than to put on casque and hauberk and go slay poor simple folk who have done no wrong to any."

"But your uncle, my son, your uncle," urged the mother, anxiously. She had long known that her son cared for study rather than for the street, and was therefore in no wise surprised at his words; but she feared lest his uncle should be wrath, and deal harshly with her fatherless boy.

"My uncle may fight as he will," laughed the boy merrily "and scold as he will, too, so you be not angry or grieved, sweet mother mine." And he twined his arms lovingly round his mother's shoulder, and kissed away her tremors and her anxieties, till she sat down happily to supper, content in her heart of hearts that her darling should escape from the turmoil of that dangerous time, and should grow into a revered monk like Father Anselm, or one of the grave brethren of the famous monastery to which he belonged. But no such monk as one of those, poor anxious mother, shall be that gallant-hearted, passionate, eager lad of yours. Oh, could you have read his fortune on that summer evening, I doubt whether you would not have chosen for him the rough toils and perils of the soldier's life rather than that seemingly peaceful one which opened as the monastery gate rolled back to let in the future monk, and which ended on the Field of Flowers in Rome, long ere the full life had begun to sink into old age. But that future was hidden from her loving eyes, and she bade farewell to her boy, sadly indeed, but yet resignedly, as he set forth to his new home, and plunged



BUST OF GIORDANO BRUNO (FRONT VIEW).



into the new studies with all the eagerness of his fiery youth, with all the passion of his warm Italian heart.

And there for some years he studied, and when the due time arrived he took the vows of the Dominican Order, and clad himself in the monk's frock. But Father Anselm, who loved him, and who marvelled at his keen wit and his strong, subtle thought, would oftentimes shake his head gravely and sigh: "I fear me that that keen head will not rest easy under the cowl, and that that strong brain will bring its owner into trouble." And he would try to check the young man's eager questioning, and to dull his ardour after study, for he thought that there was peril in the future, in those days of growing heresy, for a youth who would never accept an answer to a question if the answer would not bear investigation, and who must ever be probing the old truths and the old beliefs, and refusing to accept as certain all that holy Church taught and all the traditions of Rome.

"My son, my son," the gentle old monk would say, "you seek to know too much. There is danger in your endless questionings and in your desire to be wise above that which is written. Read your breviary, and chant your offices, and leave Copernicus and his dreams alone. Does not Holy Writ declare that God 'has fixed the round earth so fast that it cannot be moved,' and did not Joshua call on the sun to stand still—a command which would have been absurd had the sun been stationary, as Copernicus suggests? The book tells us distinctly that 'the sun stood still,' and it must, therefore, have been moving before. Giordano, Giordano, my son, your questionings will lead into heresy, if you be



not careful, and the Holy Inquisition has arguments that I would be loth to see applied to my favourite pupil."

*Then Bruno would kiss the old man's hand, and say some light word to comfort him ; but alone he would pace up and down his narrow cell, struggling, thinking, wondering, praying for a light that never came in answer to his prayer, and longing to be free of the narrow round of monastic duties, and to share in the intellectual struggles, the sound of which he heard afar, the struggle raging in every University of Europe between the old order and the new, between the philosophy of the past and the thought of the present. The young lion found his cage too narrow for him, and the confinement began to gall.*

In that monastery library Bruno found a danger that had been missed by the careless monks around him ; he tells us that " after having cultivated literature and poetry for a long time, my guides themselves, my superiors and my judges, led me to philosophy and free enquiry ". But what place had philosophy and free enquiry within the walls of an Italian monastery, and what greater danger could befall a man than to find such things as these ? At that time Aristotle was supreme in the Christian church, and Bruno, preferring the philosophy of Pythagoras and of Plato, soon found himself in conflict with his teachers. Pythagoras had taught that the sun was the centre of our system, and that the earth was but a planet revolving round it, and, Pythagorean student as he was, Giordano naturally followed the teaching of Copernicus on the same subject, despite all that Father Anselm could urge. And, indeed, Giordano had latterly shunned the kind old monk, being unwilling

to give him needless pain, and yet more unwilling to seem to be less true.

For some weeks past Father Anselm had noticed that evil glances were being thrown on his favourite pupil, and he had caught one or two muttered phrases that alarmed him for his safety. A witty pasquinade, entitled 'Noah's Ark,' had been written by the young monk, and had given sore offence in the monastery, for in it he, under a thin veil of allegory, mocked at the luxury and ignorance of the monkish orders, and the lash of his sarcasm had curled round and stung some of the brethren in his own monastery, and bitter complaint had been made to the Prior that this young critic of monkish ways needed a lesson to teach him to keep that glibbing tongue of his from slandering his elders and superiors. At last the word 'heretic' began to be bandied about freely from mouth to mouth, and whispers circulated that the Prior would soon take measures to teach the malapert monk to mend the error of his ways. And one afternoon, as Bruno lay idly in the vineyard adjoining the garden of the monastery, he saw Father Anselm approaching with hurried steps and troubled countenance, and rising, he went to meet him and asked him gently what was amiss. The old man sank down on the sunny slope, well-nigh breathless with his haste and the grief that oppressed him, and Bruno waited patiently till he had recovered power of speech, and Anselm said :

"Giordano, my son, danger is around you. Your foolish talk about the earth moving, and of the inhabitants of other worlds than this, which you insanely pretend are among the stars above our heads, has reached the Prior's ears. Father Jerome, who thought you

aimed at him in that biting jest of yours on the swine saved by Noah in the ark, has whispered in the Prior's ear that you are a heretic, dangerous to the good name of the monastery in the country round, and the Prior, who is, as you know, a good man, but withal somewhat narrow-minded in his faith—and truly he is blessed therein, in that it saves him from many anxious questionings of the doctrines of Holy Church—has taken alarm, and is minded to question you before the brethren touching your rejection of Aristotle, and your belief in these new-fangled theories of Copernicus. I fear me lest—”

“Fear nothing,” said the young monk, proudly, springing to his feet, and tossing back his head with a gesture of bright self-confidence that beseeemed him well; “Fear not for me, father, for I fear not for myself.”

“And therefore do I fear, my son,” answered sadly the elder monk. “Satan triumphs most easily over those that have not the ‘spirit of holy fear’. Your speculations are too bold, and you cannot have weighed well all that is implied in the idea of this firm world of ours revolving in space. Where do you believe hell is, and where the souls of the lost, and the devils chained in darkness, in this new universe of yours that has neither top nor bottom?”

“Truly,” said Bruno, laughing softly, “I have not troubled my brain much with such Satanic geography, and there can indeed be no ‘under the earth,’ now that we know that it is ever turning in its journey round the sun.”

“Hush, hush, my son!” the old man said hastily, crossing himself as he spoke. “Beware lest Satan himself come to show you the way to the prison beneath the earth, whence none goeth forth. But bethink you :

whither went the blessed Lord when he ascended, going upwards, as we read, from the surface of this earth, and being received into heaven. How could he ascend from a whirling globe and in what direction went he when he was, as Holy Writ tells us, taken *up*? Tush, tush, my son, your fancies are blasphemous absurdities, and were they true the cardinal doctrines of our holy faith would become impossible, which may the blessed Virgin and the saints forefend.” And again he crossed himself piously as he spoke.

A strange and subtle smile flitted over Bruno’s mouth at the last sentence of the simple father, and he opened his lips to answer. But ere a word was uttered he checked himself, thinking: “Of what avail to shake the old man’s faith.” So he spoke no word, but looked across the sea, his deep eyes full of search and longing, and of unsatisfied yearning after certainty of truth.

“Giordano!” again said the old monk, “listen to me. You are young and brave, but your youth and your courage will not avail you in to-morrow’s strife. I shall have to do heavy penance for my warning, but warn you of your peril I will, at whatever risk. They are plotting to catch you in your answers, that they may stamp you heretic; and I know—” the trembling voice sank into a whisper—“I know that a messenger has gone to the Holy Office at Naples, and the inquisitor will be here to-morrow to—”

The bright listening face blanched for a moment, but then the mobile lips grew firm and set, and Bruno laid his hand gently on his friend’s arm.

“What would you have me do, my father? You would *not* have me lie, even to escape the terrors of the Holy Office?”

“Fly! fly!” the old man whispered. “Fly while there is yet time. Oh! my son! I would not see your young limbs broken on the rack, your young face writhen with pain! Oh! I have seen—I have seen—” The good monk’s voice failed him, and he broke down in strong emotion; and then, hearing steps coming in the direction of the vineyard, he rose and went hastily. 17123.

For an hour Giordano Bruno sat where his friend had left him, still seemingly gazing idly across the sea. But his heart was full of warring, surging thoughts, as he strove to judge his danger, and the best way of swift escape. Presently the light came back to his eyes, the smile to his lips, and he leapt to his feet. “Good fathers all,” he said merrily, “I leave Noah’s Ark to-night; for I fear it is no longer an ark of safety for me.”

So that night, when all were sleeping round him, Giordano Bruno rose silently from his pallet, and after listening a few minutes to see that none were stirring save himself, he unwound a rope which he had coiled round his waist beneath his monkish frock, and knotting one end tightly to the bar of his window, he slipped out through the narrow opening and slid swiftly to the ground, and struck off across the country northwards, his heart bounding with new liberty, and his young limbs rejoicing in the strain of his rapid flight. And it was well he fled; for the messenger to the Holy Office returned with tidings that ere day dawned the familiars would be at the monastery, and that they would seize the young rebel and take him to Naples instantly, and that the questionings should be done at the hall of the Holy Office itself. But when they came, those terrible bloodhounds of the Inquisition, they found an empty cell, whence the victim had escaped; and they were fain

to be content with excommunicating him—delivering him over, body and soul, to the devil ; while he, rejoicing in his strength, set his face northwards towards the Appenines.

Forward and northwards ever went the fugitive monk, generally on foot but now and then getting a lift from a friendly traveller, wending his way in the same direction. When he approached a town, being afraid of being questioned, he usually hid till the evening fell, and then during the darkness slipped past unnoticed, as though he had committed some crime and were fleeing from the hands of justice. For it is one of the evils of superstition that, in countries where it is powerful, it treats honest men as criminals and criminals as honest men, provided only that the criminals are devout, and obey the clergy, and frequent the Church. Until Christianity became softened and liberalised by Free-thought, it was safer in every country of Christendom to be a murderer or thief than to be a heretic. For the murderer and the thief could buy forgiveness and safety by gold and by prayer, whereas the heretic found the rack and the stake the penalty for pure life and honest speech.

At last Giordano saw the white tops of the mountains which divide Italy from the fair Swiss land, and knowing that Switzerland had to a great extent thrown off allegiance to Papal Rome, and that the Protestant Reformers there dwelt in safety and in honour, he dreamed that when he crossed that mountain barrier he would be free to breathe in safety, far from the grim clutch of the Inquisition. Ah, Bruno ! you have to learn that hatred of science and persecuting zeal are not the marks of one Christian sect more than of another, but

are of the very essence of the Christian faith itself ! As well seek for a blind man who can see, as for a Christian who can respect the freedom of thought of a heretic.

*Up the steep sides of Mont St. Bernard he climbed, and he reached the top as soon as the sun began to sink ; he stood and looked across the plain of Italy, billowing far beneath his feet, and as he looked the Italian heart in him melted, and he sank on his knees and stretched out his arms towards the wide landscape, glowing in the radiance of the setting sun :*

“ Italy ! Italy ! ” he cried aloud, and the hot tears rolled down the brave young face, writhen now with pain ; “ Italy ! Italy ! my beautiful, my beloved ! chained as Prometheus on the mountain peak, thou who hast brought to men that living fire, stolen from the burning heart of Nature, the divine, the self-sufficing, the mother of all ; as Prometheus torn by vulture beak, torn by Pope and priest, yet as Prometheus undying, and looking for the redemption that shall be ! Italy ! I fly from the devils incarnate, made by Christianity out of men ; shall I ever come back to thee, to live and die in thee ? Hast thou for me a home and a refuge ; or, my Italy, hast thou only a grave ? ” •

O Giordano Bruno ! noble son of Italia degraded ; thy Italy has for thee no home or refuge ; thy Italy has for thee not even a grave. Italian winds shall scatter thy ashes far and wide over Italian soil, and those ashes shall be the seeds that, after two centuries, shall bloom into flowers of memory and gratitude for thee !

His last farewell to Italy spoken, Bruno turned his back resolutely on the land which the Inquisition was searing, and slowly paced along the path which led to the hospice of St. Bernard. As he turned the corner

which shut out Italy, he came in sight of the long low building, sheltered from the wild winds and nestling beneath a guardian crag. No possibility was there that he should pass unseen that hospitable door, for already the dogs had scented his approach, and the deep bay of twenty noble animals welcomed the wanderer to the refuge of all travellers to the pass. But Bruno dared not enter a dwelling where his tonsure would tell of the profession he had rejected, and where he would find it hard to parry the curious questions of his hosts, so when he reached the hospice door, he prayed but for a crust of bread and a drink of thin red wine, and, urging that his business forced him to hasten onwards, despite the growing darkness, he started again on his way, down the path that led to the valley far below. Four or five of the dogs escorted him on his road, until he reached the limit of the snow, and then with a deep bay of farewell, they turned homewards again, leaving him to pursue, with lightened heart—since now indeed he was in Switzerland—his steep and slippery way. Downwards and downwards, ever, till he reached the refuge of St. Pierre, and there, wearied out, he craved a night's lodging, and slept his first really fearless sleep since he had quitted his monastery cell.

Far into the next day he slept, and at length awoke refreshed and vigorous, and started once more, still downwards, though the path was now less steep and rugged than it had ever been before. And thus on till the vale was reached, and on till he passed by the Tête Noire to Chamounix, and saw the mighty, stainless head of Mont Blanc rise pure and dazzling against the clear blue sky. And onwards still, through a land now less stern and grand, but not less beautiful, until the broad



waters of Lake Lemman smiled at the weary traveller, and until at length he reached the fair city stretched beside the Lake, and the walls of Geneva rose before him, the refuge to which his thoughts had pointed since he swung himself downwards from the window of his cell.

Fearlessly, with head erect, he passed into the famous city, the city of Calvin and of Beza. Calvin indeed was dead—he had died in 1564, and it was now 1580—but Calvin's spirit still dominated the city in which he had ruled supreme. At first Bruno found welcome from the Genevan Reformers, for they regarded him only as rebel to Rome, and dreamed not that the soaring spirit of this young man, now but thirty years of age, had broken not the fetters of Rome, but the fetters of Christianity, and that Calvin's narrow theology could no more hold him captive than could the statelier creed of Rome. For a while, however, brief rest was his, until that warrior spirit of his, ever longing for battle with its peers, flung itself into hot controversy over the old quarrel with the philosophy of Aristotle. Just as Aristotle had become the pillar of orthodoxy in the Catholic church, so did Aristotle also rule unchallenged in Geneva. In fact, the Genevan citizens had actually passed a decree "for once and for ever, that neither in logic nor in any other branch of learning, shall any one among them go astray from the opinions of Aristotle".

Such iron mould of thought did in no wise suit Bruno's enquiring and ever-progressing genius and he soon found that, as before in the monastery, evil looks were cast on him, and hard words were his lot. To his surprise at first, and then to his bitter indignation, he found that the Protestants of Geneva claimed the right to dissent from Rome, and the right to persecute those

who dissented from themselves, and at last, being told that the rulers of the city had begun to recall the fate of Servetus, burned in that very city by Calvin, but some twenty-seven years before, Bruno deemed that he would do wisely to take to flight once more, lest the prison he had fled from in Italy should reappear to incarcerate him in Switzerland.

For the second time Giordano was a fugitive. For the second time as night spread her precious darkness over the earth, Giordano stood beside an open window, watching for chance of escape. A friend had given him shelter whose house was on one of the city walls; and this night, when all was still, and the far-off tramp of the sentinel seemed only to mark the silence of the dusk, Giordano Bruno slipped down a rope from the window and safely reached the ground, and waving silent farewell to the faithful friend above, he turned his footsteps towards France, outcast and fugitive once more, and slowly made his way to Lyons.

Of the stay of Giordano Bruno in Lyons we know nothing. At that time Lyons was a centre of printing, and from the presses of Lyons poured out books which were spread over Europe, carrying light. Did Bruno long to see with his own eyes those printing presses which then seemed so wonderful? We cannot say. But we know that his stay in Lyons was very brief, and that he passed on to Toulouse. But in Toulouse was no safe resting-place for Bruno. Toulouse boasted itself the bulwark of the faith against the reforming tide, and soon threats resounded from every side against the heretic visitor, who, coming from the city of Calvin, was worse heretic than Calvin himself. Thirty-six years later a fellow-countryman of Bruno, Vanini the

Neapolitan, was burned for heresy in that same city of Toulouse, and Bruno was wise in quitting it and seeking rest in more liberal Paris. An exciting journey was that of our young Italian through France—"a long and vast tumult," he himself styled it. Papist and Huguenot were fighting against each other with equal religious ferocity, equal religious fanaticism. "The Papists razed the Churches of the Huguenots; the Huguenots pillaged the sacristies of the Papists; blood flowed in town and country; fanaticism stifled family affection and civic friendship; the priests excommunicated with ringing bell and extinguished torch; the parsons anathematised pharisaism and idolatry." Through this Babel of wavering creeds the heretic went on his way, noting how religion desolated a Christian land, and how Catholic and Protestant alike robbed and murdered to the glory of their Gods.

In 1582, Bruno saw stretching before him the long-dreamed-of city of Paris—Paris where he hoped to find an asylum, perhaps a welcome. There the Sorbonne stood as the type of unyielding bigotry, of protest against all new thought; face to face with it was the Royal College of France, welcoming the scientific spirit, welcoming the new light. Here, indeed, was a fair field for the knight-errant of Free-thought, and here he put lance in rest to charge gallantly down on his old foe Aristotle, the idol of the Sorbonne. He asked permission to teach philosophy in public, and this being granted, the young Italian was surrounded soon by crowds of adoring pupils, attracted by "his ready wit and the Neapolitan warmth of his oratory". Here was a teacher who made the driest study attractive, the hardest subject easy. The King, Henry III, bade the young scholar attend his court;

for the monk's cell he had the splendour of the palace ; for weary cloistered hours the joy of intellectual combat, of vivid Parisian life.

"Giordano," said Henry brightly to him one day, entering his favourite's room ; "Giordano, mon ami, I have good news for you. In the University a chair of Philosophy is vacant, and they tell me none can fill it better than a certain eloquent Italian, one Bruno, who has taken the town by storm."

Bruno, who had risen to his feet as the king entered, flushed over brow and cheek. "A chair, Sire !" he faltered. "A chair for me in the University of Paris ! I have dreamed of this at some future day, but I am yet too young, too unknown—"

"Tut, tut !" interrupted the King. "Who better than you can draw the youth of Paris, or better control the same turbulent youth ? No easy task it has been found, I warrant you. No hesitation, Giordano mio ; I will that a countryman of my mother shall fill a chair that he can fill so worthily."

"Sire, I can but accept," answered Bruno, gratefully. "I shall indeed have found rest and peace here, after my long wanderings. And when will my duties commence, my royal and generous friend ?"

"Commence ? Oh, at once," replied the King. "There are a few necessary formalities to be gone through, the signing of the papers and so on. And, by the way, Giordano, you are careless of your religious duties. I do not remember me to have seen you at mass. Do not forget, my dear professor, that attendance at mass is one of the duties of your position."

Bruno started, and his bright eager face clouded, and became dark and set as flint.

“Did I understand your Majesty rightly?” he said gravely; “as a professor I must attend mass?”

“Yes, surely,” quoth the king, unnoticing the change of his companion’s tone and face. “You would not have the professor set an example of irreligion to the University? Oh, it is not a long business, I assure you. You need not grudge such short loss of time, you busiest of men.”

Bruno turned and walked to the window, a sore conflict raging in his heart. The professorship gave him an assured position, an adequate income. After all, what was a mass? A number of foolish words, of senseless phrases. He need only pretend belief in it all, and he would be safe, and might pursue his philosophical studies in peace. If he refused, not only would he lose the professorship, but the fickle and bigoted king might turn against him, and he might be driven from Paris, as from Italy and Switzerland, from Lyons and Toulouse. Only a mass? “Only a lie,” muttered Bruno to himself between his teeth, and then his brow cleared and his eyes shone out again bright and true; he turned back to the king, who was gazing at him with surprise:

“Sire,” he said gently, “you are goodness itself to an Italian exile; be not angry that I cannot accept the condition annexed to the gift you honour me with.”

“The condition?” questioned the king. “What condition?”

“Sire, the attendance at mass.”

“That is folly, Bruno. I have told you the service is brief, and however indifferent you may be to religious duties, no good Catholic should object to attending mass.”

“But, Sire,” answered the young man in tones low and grave, “I am not a Catholic, and I cannot in honesty

attend mass. "Stay," he said pleadingly, as the king started back in horror. "I have not wilfully deceived you ; my lectures have been on philosophy and not on theology, and no question of my personal faith has arisen. Long ago, I began to doubt ; I became a monk in 1572, but study made my faith waver—"

He stopped, for his pleading was unheard. Henry was pacing up and down the room, his face black as night. At last he stopped and faced the young Italian.

"Do I understand you rightly?" he said sternly. "Do I understand that you are not a Catholic? that you reject the authority of Holy Church, and are a heretic, a Lutheran, or a Calvinist, or perchance one of the accursed Huguenot fanatics?"

"I am not a Catholic," answered Bruno steadily, "nor do I follow Luther or Calvin, or any of the Huguenot Protestants. I am a philosopher, a man of science, and my thought fits not into any creed I know."

There was silence for awhile; then the brave face and pleading eyes touched the king's heart, despite his religion, and he stretched out his hand to the young man, bold enough to hold his own face-to-face with danger and with royal wrath.

"Adieu!" he said gravely. "Be silent on your heresy, if you value your life. Holy Church has sharp arguments wherewith to convince the unbeliever, and there are seats more uncomfortable than that of a professorship burdened with a mass. I will pray our Blessed Lady to bring you to a better frame of mind; but if the doctors of the Sorbonne hear of your impious folly, even my favour may not avail to shield you."

And as the door closed, Giordano's head dropped, and a weary look clouded the brightness of his face.

Was he again to be a fugitive, a wanderer? Was there no rest for the man who had outgrown the superstition of Christianity?

In 1583, Bruno turned his face northwards, and travelled to England, bearing a letter from King Henry to Michael de Castelnau, French ambassador at the Court of Elizabeth, from whom he received friendly greeting and cordial hospitality. In the brilliant court of Elizabeth, Bruno found a congenial spirit in Sir Philip Sidney, the chivalrous and generous-hearted, and the Italian and the Englishman were soon closely knit in bonds of loyal friendship. Ever does Bruno speak tenderly and reverently of the rare mind and heart of his beloved friend. For Elizabeth herself, he conceived an intense admiration, and his praises of this Protestant Queen, worded with all the warmth and the exaggeration of that time, were used against him with terrible effect, when the bloodhounds of the Inquisition pulled him down in later years. "No noble of her realm equals her in dignity, in heroism; no lawyer is so learned; no statesman is so wise. . . . She rises as a brilliant sun to shed light over the globe. By her title and her royal dignity, she is inferior to no monarch in the world. In the judgment, wisdom, and prudence she displays in governing, it is difficult to find a Queen who approaches her." And this Elizabeth, so highly praised, was the excommunicated foe of Rome, the anathematised heretic who had rent England from the papal obedience.

At that time England and Italy were as sisters, save in religion. Italian learning, Italian art and Italian literature—all found heartiest welcome under English skies. Shakespeare found in Italy much of inspiration; later, Milton travelled thitherwards to seek poetic

culture ; the English court was as Italy to an Italian, and Bruno found himself surrounded there by memories of all he held most dear. Here might the knight-errant of liberty have found rest, had he been content to veil some of his boldest thoughts, and to pass merely as a Protestant, warring against the pretensions and the tyranny of Rome. But no such veiling was possible to Bruno, for soon came chance of bold speech—chance too tempting to be lost by the fiery Italian orator.

The fair city of the Isis was *en fête* in June, 1583 ; as river Thames rolled past her dainty spires and tall battlements, he saw Oxford in her most gallant array, and heard the hum of many tongues. For the Earl of Leicester, Elizabeth's haughty favourite, held his court there as the Chancellor of the University, and gave right royal welcome to the Count Albert de Lasco, having gathered there to do him honour England's most learned sons. Purple-robed doctors were there in long procession ; splendid banquets were spread ; and on each day a literary tournament was held, in which philosophical theses were maintained and attacked, in which tongues served as lances and syllogisms as battle-axes. At last, when Oxford challenged all comers to meet her sons in wordy warfare, Bruno's warrior-spirit flashed into fire, as when steel strikes flint. See him as he stands in the arena—beautiful, eager, eloquent, fighting anew the same old battle that he has fought in Italy, in Switzerland, in France. It is again the question of questions for the sixteenth century : Does the earth move ? Are there more worlds than one ? " The earth is motionless ; the universe is finite and mobile," said the University with Aristotle and Ptolemy. " The earth revolves, and the universe is infinite," said Bruno,



leaning on Philelaus and Copernicus. Bruno has left his own account of the struggle. "The dispute grew envenomed; my antagonists took refuge in sarcasms and insults. One, seizing pen and paper, cried: 'Look, be silent and learn; I will teach you Ptolemy and Copernicus.' But as soon as he began to sketch the spheres, it was clear that he had never opened Copernicus."

And he on whose side was the Truth silenced his opponents, though he stood alone; and many a brow was bent darkly on the gallant Italian, as he strove for the honour of his mistress Science, and carried her colours victoriously through the fray.

Then Bruno prayed for and obtained permission to lecture at Oxford, and there as at Paris, his lecture-room was crowded, though as he walked along the streets men turned and muttered: 'Atheist!' and priests, hearing that the Bible was not of authority in science, scowled bitterly at him as he passed, and sternly bade the young men leave alone the heretic and blasphemer, who would drag their souls to hell.

At last England became too hot to hold any longer the bold philosopher; his friends, Michael de Castelnau and Philip Sidney, 'had both been called abroad, and their strong protection was no longer around him. Threats grew louder, the storm-clouds hung heavier; and at last, early in 1586, Bruno fled from England to France once more, and held during three days in Paris at Whitsuntide a public dispute, still on the physics of Aristotle. This dispute put an end to his residence in Paris. Henry no longer dared to defend him, and the Sorbonne muttered threats of punishment; so Bruno was once more forced to fly, and turned his steps to Marburg in Hesse, hoping to find work and livelihood

at the University there. At first, things looked brighter. In the July of the same year a doctor's degree was bestowed upon him, and strong, as he fancied, in this recognition, he begged permission to teach philosophy.

As he waited this permission, regarded merely as a matter of form, Bruno's heart grew light. Here at length he might teach freely; here at length he might spread the truth he loved, and none would hinder him. As his messenger returned with a silk-tied scroll in his hand, Bruno took it gaily and carelessly, and cut the silken thread with a smile on his lips. But see how his face changes; see how his eyes darken; the Rector of the University writes dryly that he is obliged to deny the permission asked for; there are grave 'reasons' why Bruno should not be allowed to teach, and so forth. The passionate Italian leapt to his feet in fiery wrath, and swiftly made his way to the Rector's house. Ushered into his presence, he flung the scroll on the table, and demanded to know what reasons were referred to. "Doctor of your University have you made me, and the doctor's right of teaching you deny me. Of what avail the empty title? Why do you treat me thus?"

The frigid thin-lipped Rector, Pierre Nigidius, drew his mouth into an acrid downward curve: "Your views, Dr. Bruno are not sound. They are not such as are safe in a teacher of the young."

"Sound? safe?" cried Bruno impetuously. "But if they are *true*?"

"Truth must be measured by the divine standard, my dear Sir, and your teaching that the earth revolves flies in the face of Scripture."

"So much the worse for Scripture," answered the hasty Italian, careless of the Rector's darkening face.

“ You blasphemer ! ” he answered sharply. “ But no blasphemer shall teach in this city while I, Pierre Nigidius, have rule within its walls.”

“ Take back then your trumpery degree ! ” cried Bruno, in his wrath, “ for teacher who may not teach I will never be. Erase my name from the list of your University, and do me not an honour as empty as your own creed.”

“ There is no difficulty in erasing your name,” sneered Nigidius, “ from a list that ought never to have been dishonoured by it. Erased it shall be before the sun goes down, as it is erased from the Lamb’s book of life, and look to yourself, blaspheming infidel, lest you learn that Marburg has prison for the heretic, be he foreigner or citizen of the State.”

So Bruno became once again a wanderer, and took refuge in Würtemberg.

There for two years Bruno found rest in the bosom of the University in Würtemberg, where there prevailed “ liberty of speech and love of literature”. “ Würtemberg,” he said, “ is the Athens of Germany. Minerva the virgin is its mother ! ” And he left behind him his grateful words of thanks to this noble asylum of learning and of liberty, words that each should remember who may now tread the sacred streets of that German town :

“ You did not question me as to my faith, which you did not approve ; you regarded only my love for charity and peace, for philanthropy and philosophy ; you allowed me to be only friend of wisdom, the lover of the muses ; you did not forbid me to proclaim freely opinions contrary to the doctrines received among you. . . . Although philosophy is among you neither end

nor means ; although your piety, sober, pure, primitive, makes you prefer ancient physics and the mathematics of the past, yet you allow me to profess a new system. . . . You did not grow angry ; you showed wisdom, humanity and urbanity, with the sincere wish to help and to serve. . . Far from restraining liberty of thought and from tarnishing your reputation for hospitality, you treated the traveller, the foreigner, the proscribed, as friend and fellow-citizen ; you allowed him to protect himself against poverty by teaching ; you repelled all the calumnies circulated about him during the two years that he spent within your walls, beneath the shade of your hospitality.”

There is nothing to show why Bruno quitted this peaceful retreat, where he was safe, honoured and beloved. Perhaps his fiery warrior spirit could not rest happily where no combats were raging, and he yearned once more for the turmoil of hot theological controversy. Be that as it may, he left Würtemberg in 1588, and went to Prague, where the Emperor Rudolph II was holding his court. To the Emperor Bruno presented some mathematical theses, having learned that Rudolph was a friend to learning, but Bruno's heresy tainted his mathematics, and the Christian ruler turned a cold face on the heretic thinker. So he travelled to Helmstadt, where he became tutor to the eldest son of the reigning Duke of Brunswick for a few months, and then, the Duke dying, persecution struck at him once more. Boethius, the head of the clergy, excommunicated him in open church, and all men thenceforth regarded him as outcast. For one year of struggle he held his ground, and then finding life was being made impossible for him he passed out once more among strangers, teaching ever the doctrines that he loved.

And now Frankfurt knew him for a few months, from June, 1590 to February, 1591, and here he published his last works, while his home-life was cared for by a family named Wechel, a member of which had been a friend of Sir Philip Sidney. In Frankfurt came to him a letter which drew him back to Italy, drew him back into the jaws of that Inquisition from which he had fled, and which had had its sleuth-hounds on his trail ever since. See him as he bends over the letter, his cheeks flushing with the thought of Italy. The scroll was signed 'Giovanni Mocenigo'; it prayed him come to Venice as tutor, assuring him of full safety and of cordial welcome. The young noble who wrote was of a house strong enough to protect, and he pledged his faith that a secure home on Italian soil awaited the brilliant teacher, whose name for the last ten years had been ringing through Europe.

The letter dropped from Bruno's hands, as he rose slowly to his feet, and turned to the window which opened towards the south.

"Italia! Italia!" he sighed, his own soft Neapolitan tongue falling from his lips in cadences most musical. "My beautiful, my beloved; shall I indeed see you once more? Oh, to feel the air of Italy, after the heavy air of the north! Oh, to see the skies of Italy, after these dull greys that are never blue!"

His eyes sparkled, his pulses throbbed—but suddenly his head drooped, and a weary sadness settled on his face.

"The Inquisition! What noble house can guard me from the cruel claws of the Roman wolf? Italy, which cradled me, will be my grave, I fear me, if I listen to the pleadings of this youth, and dwell in Venice. Here

at least, I am safe ; and if one town grows too hot for me, another is open to me. But there ! O Italy ! thy palaces cover thy dungeons, and thy beauty is the mask over the face of the familiar.”

The struggle of uncertainty was long ; but at last the yearning for Italy, the home-sickness, triumphed, and Giordano Bruno set his face Italianwards. He travelled through Switzerland, paying a brief visit to Zürich, and then, crossing the Alps, saw stretching below him, in their autumnal glory, the sunny plains of the Italy he had loved and left. He turned his steps first to Padua, unable to resist the temptation of raising his voice for science in that famous town, whose University had on its roll the most illustrious names of Italy. His audacity struck his friends with terror : “ It is said that the Nolan (Bruno),” wrote Acidalino from Bologna to Forgacz, Baron de Gimes, then in Padua, “ is living and teaching among you. Is it so ? What can that man be doing in Italy, whence he was forced to flee ? I am astonished, stupefied, and cannot believe the rumour true, well authenticated as it is.”

A storm soon gathered round the intrepid heretic, and Bruno fled to Venice ; and in March, 1592, we find him established in the palace of Giovanni Mocenigo. Here for about two months he dwelt in safety, pouring out for his pupil the treasures of learning he had acquired. Often and often, as they passed silently in their gondola along the narrow waterways, they conversed freely on the controverted questions of the day, on the Copernican theory, on the authority of Rome in matters of science. Often as the stars shone down from the cloudless sky, Bruno gazing at them would dazzle his companion with his dreams of other inhabited worlds and of

*the manifold life in endless forms distributed over the endless universe.* Little did he guess that those views of *his, spoken freely in friendly converse, were repeated day after day* by his pupil's lips into the ear of a dark-browed confessor, who later, in a parlour of the Inquisition, met his fellow-priests, and took counsel with them how Bruno might be betrayed unto them that they might put him to death.

The September moon shone broadly over Venice, and Bruno stood leaning lazily against one of the columns which stood at the foot of the broad, white steps of the Mocenigo Palazzo, its base washed by the waters of the blue Adriatic Sea. In the glorious prime of his manhood, in the gracious beauty of his strength and vigour, he leaned there, gazing with those deep eyes of his at the ripples as they danced in the moonlight, at the brilliant full-faced moon hanging in the shimmering air. "How good life is; how beautiful Nature is;" he mused, with a smile on his lips. "Yet fools talk of hell-fire, and curse their brothers, under this serene expanse, amid this infinitude of worlds."

The moon-rays floated across the water, until the side of the canal which skirted the Mocenigo Palazzo lay in darkest shadow. None could see a gondola that slid swiftly and silently in till it lay at rest in the dimness beyond the steps on which Bruno lounged in his careless restful ease.

"How beautiful life is without the Gods," he murmured. "Mighty universal mother! calm, serene, changing amid changelessness; marvellous in beauty; glorious in majesty; would they have me blaspheme thee that I might worship their puny fancies? O eternal Beauty!" and he sprang to his feet, stretching out his

arms to the infinite expanse ; “ O boundless space ! How could I live without thy fetterless freedom ? How could I exist without thy radiant. . . . ”

The melodious voice rang out in its joy into the sweet evening air, and as its music rose a grating sound was heard. See ! that shadowed gondola is at the steps ; masked figures spring out and stain the moonlight with their darkness ; a black cloak is flung over the sunny head and stifles the harmony of the glorious tones into a gasp that is like a death-rattle ; the eyes have looked their last on the freedom of the dancing wavelets ; never again shall those arms stretch out fetterless towards the boundless blue. Giordano Bruno is in the grip of the Inquisition, and never again, O noble soldier of Liberty, shall thine eyes range in freedom over the glory that had sunned thee from thy birth, and had become incarnate in the radiance of thy shadowless joy in life.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is dark, drear and damp in that low chamber where Bruno lies, a grim circle round him. He is naked, and he lies on a frame, his ankles and his wrists bound tightly, and the sunny head thrown back ; dauntless are brow and lip ; fearless the bright brave eyes ; and see that figure, crouching in the shadow ; it is Judas ; it is Giovanni Mocenigo, who has betrayed him to his doom.

“ Come forth, Giovanni ! ” croaked a voice through the darkness. “ Reveal the blasphemy thou hast confessed.”

Judas was dragged within the range of those star-bright eyes, and shrank and cowered under their light ; his lips muttered, but could not speak.

“ Nay, let the lad go ! ” rang out the sweet full tones in their ancient music, shaming the harsh echoes



of the cell. "Let the lad go ; poor boy ! he knows not what he has done. I make his confession for him. I have lifted one corner of the veil that hides the mighty mother from her children. What need to torture a child when you are set to murder a man ? "

" Blasphemer ! heretic ! the rack shall teach thee faith," foamed the masked inquisitor beside him, and at a sign the wheels turned, and the pulleys creaked, and under the fearful strain the sweat of agony streamed from the naked body, and brow and lips were writhen with intolerable pain.

" Now, heretic, recant ! Now pray for mercy to the God thou hast blasphemed, to the Church thou hast abandoned. Apostate monk, confess thy Master ! Recant thy heresies, and even now mercy is thine."

" Truth that I have worshipped, keep me true," fell from the white lips, gasping in their pain. And the bright head fell back, and merciful nature drew the veil of a swoon over the awful agony.

The torturers lifted the strained body from the rack, and cast it, senseless, into a dungeon far beneath the level of the waves that lapped against the castle walls. And, for six years Giordano Bruno lay, for truth's sake, in that cell ! No sunlight ever touched him ; no friend's voice ever reached his ear ; no smile ever met his aching eyes ; no book cheered his loneliness ; no pen was granted to his numbed and wearied hand. He was buried living in the tomb. Such mercy gave the Christian to the man who dared to think.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eight years have passed, six in the tomb at Venice, and two since in Rome. The last two have been passed in controversy, and something of the old delight in strife

has awakened in the long-stifled breast. But is this Bruno? The sunny hair has bleached in the darkness of the Venice dungeon ; the bright eyes are bleared when the unused sunlight touches them; the strong limbs are bent and weak as those of an old man. The Christians have starved and tortured his life out of him. The heretic is old in the prime of his manhood.

But now the eight years' martyrdom is nearly over. For the last time he stands before his judges. He is excommunicated as Atheist ; he is declared contumacious and irreconcilable; he is handed over to the civil officers, to be punished "without the shedding of blood"—grim formula of hypocrisy that doomed the heretic to the awful agony of the stake.

Then sprang Bruno to his feet; they had forced him to his knees to listen to his sentence. Once more rang out clear the voice whose music had been harshened in the dungeon : "I think that you pronounce that sentence with more fear than I feel in hearing it." And head erect, and face well-nigh joyful, he walked steadily from the hall.

Eight days' grace was yet given him in which to recant and deny the truth he believed ; but Bruno had not taught all through Europe, and borne eight long years of dungeon-pain, to turn recreant now to his mistress Truth. The 17th February dawns, and the day of his death is here. To the Campo dei Fiori they take him through a howling, fanatic crowd, composed in great part of pilgrims; they have clad him in the sulphur-coloured garb of heresy, hideous with pictured devils and flames and crosses, but the dress cannot mar his dignity as he walks calmly on, his eyes bright, his forehead serene, his step firm and steady;

a priest pushes forward and presses on him a crucifix, but Bruno turns away his head and will not touch it; they bind him to the stake, and no word opens his lips; the flames rise around him; but no cry escapes from him; to the end he is as serene as though he felt no agony, and the last glimpse the crowd catches of his face ere the flames sear it, shows it calmly proud as ever; and now the smoke and the fire surround him and Giordano Bruno is gone for evermore.

Gone? Ah! not so! Bruno lives while men can honour courage, and love can reverence the memory of a noble heart. He died, but from his stake rings out the message he left, which may fitly form his epitaph :

TO KNOW HOW TO DIE IN ONE CENTURY IS TO  
LIVE FOR ALL CENTURIES TO COME.



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